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REMARKS

ON

The PRICE of PROVISIONS, and the PEASANT'S LABOUR:

The BOUNTIES allowed on the EXPORTATION of CORN, eſpecially WHEAT:

WITH

PROPOSALS for their EMENDATION.

——*Tantique operis mercede negatâ.* OVID.

By ROBERT APPLEGARTH.

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TO

ARTHUR YOUNG, Esq; F. R. S.

AUTHOR OF

THE ANNALS OF AGRICULTURE;

THIS PLEA

IS

WITH ALL RESPECT

MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED.

A PLEA, &c.

THE Price of Proviſions in this Kingdom for ſeveral Years laſt paſt, has been abundantly greater, than what it was on the Average betwixt the Years 1744 and 1755 incluſive.—Bread at this * Time in London is at 15*d.*½ per Gallon, and Flour at 44*s.* per Sack; but in 1744, Flour was at 18*s.* per Sack only, and Bread in Proportion.—Now it happens commonly, that when Bread is at an high Price, every other Sort of Proviſions follows after; agreeable to this coarſe but ſignificant Proverb among Farmers; that *when Corn is dear, Horn is dear.*—This may be accounted for *thus: Dearneſs* and *Scarcity* being for the moſt Part ſynonymous; when there is a *Scarcity* in any one *particular* Sort of Corn or Victuals; it may be ſaid truly, that *there is a Scarcity in the General Maſs*; and conſequently,——*This General Maſs in all its*

* Auguſt 6th, 1790.

Parts will be affected by it.—As for Example: Suppoſe Wheat at 16*£*. per Load, with only *half a Crop*; but at 8*£*. with a *full Crop:* Now it will follow, that at 16*£*. there can be but *One Half* as much *Bran* and *Fine Pollard* made from the Wheat throughout the Kingdom, as at 8*£*.; and therefore ſuch People as were wont to feed their Horſes with *Bran*, muſt have Recourſe to *Oats* as a *Subſtitute*; which will accordingly advance the Price of *Both*:—The Failure *too* of the *Fine Pollard*, would be felt in *Hogs* and *Bacon*.—But let us further imagine ſome peſtilential Diſorder, and conſequent Mortality, to happen amongſt our Sheep: *This* would not only advance the Price of *Mutton*; but of *Beef*, *Pork*, *Fiſh*, and *Poultry* alſo; perhaps *too* of *Cheeſe* and *Butter*.—And thus the Influence that the Price of One Sort of Corn or Proviſions has upon Another, is clear and evident.

But though the Price of Proviſions has been *thus* enhanced for many Years laſt paſt, beyond what it was formerly; yet, alas! the Wages of the poor Peaſant have not been raiſed more than about *one Sixth*; that is to ſay, from one Shilling per Day, to fourteen Pence; ſo that the Caſe of this Sort of People, as well as of the Soldiery, is extremely piteous and deplorable,

and

and calls aloud for Redreſs; eſpecially as this Dearth of Proviſions, is not the Effect of Shortneſs in the Crops of Wheat; as *Theſe* have been good for ſeveral Years paſt; and if we except *that* of 1789 (which *too* was none of the worſt), they were for four or five Years together next before, as great as ever have been remembered at any time in the laſt Forty: And yet Proviſions are ſtill at a Price remarkably high: And as *Dearth* and *Dirt* and *Starving* amongſt the Poor, are frequently productive of Epidemic Diſorders; what if we place that *Putrid Fever*, which has been ſo prevalent in the Nation of late Years, to this very Account?—*Dr. Buchan* in his * *Domeſtic Medicine* ſays, "Fevers of a very bad Kind are often occa-"ſioned among Labourers, by *poor Living*."—And here let the Rich conſider, that what is *thus* generated in the *ſtarved Cottage*, may reach *their gilded Palaces*.

Now as much hath been ſaid lately, (and with great Propriety), in Favour of the African Slaves in our Weſt-India Iſlands; ſuppoſe, Reader, we were to ſay ſomething in Behalf of *John Bull's Children*; (who are worthy of at leaſt *ſome* notice);

* *Page* 48.

notice); and endeavour to ſhew the *real* Cauſe of their Calamities, and point out a Remedy; in part at leaſt? Which I therefore humbly attempt.

For many Years laſt paſt, the Legiſlature, ſanctioned by Parliament, has granted a Bounty of 5*s*. per Quarter, the Exchequer Meaſure, on all Wheat exported from this Kingdom into foreign Parts, whilſt it is under 44*s*. per Quarter in the Port from whence it is ſhipped.—So that if the Price ſhall average but the verieſt Triffle under 44*s*. (and the Port not open at the ſame Time for Importation), the Bounty is paid to the Shipper; though it muſt be acknowledged, that by a late Act of Parliament, no Bounty at any Price whatever is to be paid, juſt at this Time; nor will be probably, till after February 28th next; the Ports being abſolutely ſhut, for the preſent, againſt all Exportation.

But after that Time, this Bounty will again take Place as formerly; unleſs again ſuſpended by another temporary Act.—Now the miſtake, methinks, lies principally here;

The granting the Bounty on the Exportation of Wheat, at very high Prices; but eſpecially whilſt

it

it is at ſo exorbitant a One as 43 *s.* 11 *d.*$\frac{3}{4}$ *per Quarter, the eight Gallon Meaſure*;—Becauſe this Price beſpeaks Bread at twelve Pence the Gallon Loaf at leaſt.

It was the allowing this Bounty on high Prices in the Autumnal Quarter of 1788, during the late Famine in France and other Parts of the Continent, that has occaſioned that Dearth of Bread principally, which we have felt ever ſince; and to ſimilar Cáuſes, the ſame Calamity, for ſeveral Years before.

Now 44 *s.* per Quarter eight Gallon Meaſure; is exactly 12 *£.* 7 *s.* 6 *d.* per Load, the nine Gallon Meaſure: But let any unprejudiced Perſon judge, whether or no it be not high Time to think of a Scarcity, as impending; when Wheat is even at no more than 40 *s.* the Quarter, or 11 *£.* 5 *s.* per Load; and Bread at 11 *d.* per Gallon: For it is a ſhort *ex tempore* Mode of Reckoning amongſt Millers and Mealmen, and very rarely erroneous, that as many *Pounds* as the * Load of Wheat coſts, ſo many *Pence* the Gallon Loaf ſhould be ſold for.

A Bounty

* The Load, nine Gallon Meaſure, is the common Method by which Wheat is ſold, in moſt of the principal Corn Counties;

A Bounty on all Grain exported at certain Seaſons, is both prudent and politic. (1) To counterbalance the Land-Tax; and (2) the Poor-Rates: (3) For the Advancement of Agriculture: And (4) and *Laſtly*; for the Encouragement of Trade and Navigation; eſpecially the Latter; for Corn is a bulky Commodity, and affords much Freightage; and were this Trade to be generally loſt; we muſt loſe of our Seamen and Shipwrights proportionably.

Yet there ſeems to appear leſs Reaſon for a Bounty *now* than formerly; as we have at preſent, if I miſtake not, a much larger Conſumption at Home, in conſequence of the Nation being more populous; to which Circumſtance, that moſt excellent Art, *Inoculation of the Small Pox*, has contributed not a little.—Within theſe laſt 40 Years, I think it muſt have ſaved the Lives of numberleſs People; for there is ſcarcely a decent Family in the Kingdom, where one Half of it, at leaſt, has not been inoculated.—Before this Invention, it was by no means uncommon, for this dreadful Diſtemper, when it broke out in a Town or Village, to carry off a conſiderable Part

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Counties; and it is exactly 45 Buſhels the Exchequer or Standard Meaſure.

Part of its Inhabitants, before it left the Place: —And beſides *Inoculation*; ſuch as take it now-a-days in the natural Way, are more ſkillfuly treated, and oftner ſaved than formerly: And Many of thoſe who were reſcued from the Grave by this Art, thirty or forty Years ago; have had Children ſince, who have again been inoculated and ſpared, and added to the Number of our Inhabitants.

But let any reaſonable Man conſider, how the Peaſant with a Wife and Family can poſſibly ſubſiſt, with Bread at twelve Pence the Gallon, when his general Earnings are only fourteen Pence per Day:—The Caſe of the poor Soldier *too* is nearly as hard:—Indeed, I mention twelve Pence the Gallon only; though Bread at this Time is conſiderably dearer in moſt Parts of the Kingdom.

And this, I judge, to ariſe (as hath been already obſerved) from giving the Bounty on the Exportation of Wheat, at the high Prices abovementioned: For if 5*s*. per Quarter be a *ſufficient Bounty*, when Wheat is at *no more* than 20*s*. per Quarter; certainly it muſt be *too much* when at 43*s*. 11*d*.$\frac{3}{4}$.—Or if it be not *too much* when Wheat is at the laſt mentioned Price, it muſt be

too

too little at 20*s.* per Quarter.—For who would not wiſh to ſee it at a more even Price?—Never at 20*s.* per Quarter; for that would almoſt ruin the Farmer: Nor at 43*s.* 11*d.*$\frac{3}{4}$; becauſe *That* ſtarves the Poor; and injures all the middling Houſekeepers, by laying the Foundation, frequently, of Inſolvency and Beggary amongſt them.

It is therefore with Submiſſion to the Publick, that I offer the following Plan, by Way of Emendation. *Viz.*

That there ſhould be a Bounty allowed,

Of 10*s.* per Quarter on the Exportation of Wheat, when the Price is under 20*s.* per Quarter:

Of 7*s.* 6*d.* per Quarter, when at 20*s.* and upwards; but under 26*s.*

Of 5*s.* per Quarter, when at 26*s.* and upwards; but under 32*s.*

Of 2*s.* 6*d.* per Quarter, when at 32*s.* and upwards; but under 38*s.*

With

With Liberty to export without any Bounty at all, when at 38*s*. and upwards; but under 40*s*.

And Liberty to export, paying ſix Pence per Quarter Duty, when at 40*s*. and upwards; but under 44*s*.

At 44*s*. and upwards, the Exportation to be prohibited;

And at 48*s*. the Ports to be opened for Importation at the low Duty;

} *as is at preſent the Caſe.*

Now it is eaſy to perceive, that on the above Plan, or ſome One nearly ſimilar; the Price of Wheat would be kept more even: Seldom remarkably *high*, excepting in the Caſe of a *real* Failure in the Crop; and as ſeldom remarkably *low*; for I think the Bounty of 10*s*. per Quarter, would be to be paid but rarely; as that of 7*s*. 6*d*. at the Prices above ſtated, would ſuperſede it; by preventing Wheat from ſinking below 20*s*. per Quarter: And as rarely ſhould we need an Importation; (unleſs in Caſe of a Failure); which would ſave immenſe Sums to the Nation.

I have known the Price in Hampſhire (about the Year 1744) *even* below 20*s.* per Quarter, for a conſiderable Time together; notwithſtanding the Bounty of 5*s.* was allowed at the ſame Time.—Had it been 10*s.* inſtead of 5*s.* agreeable to my Plan; Wheat would have advanced: But 5*s.* (I have been credibly informed) was inſufficient for the Purpoſe; as there was no foreign market, at which it could be ſold, to make it anſwer at that Bounty.

But leſt this Scheme ſhould be thought to bear too hard on the landed Intereſt; I beg Leave to propoſe, by Way of Compenſation; that whereas the Bounty allowed on the Exportation of Barley, is at preſent but 2*s.* 6*d.* per Quarter; *This* ſhould be advanced to 3*s.* 6*d.* Rye from 3*s.* to 4*s.*: Oats from 2*s.* to 3*s.*: And Something might be done to favour the Exportation of Beer; perhaps by giving a Bounty on the *(ſuppoſed)* Quantity of Barley, &c. from whence it was made: And becauſe there is at preſent no Bounty at all on Beans and Grey Peaſe; I would further propoſe, that theſe Articles, under certain Prices, ſhould alſo receive it; the Beans 5s. per Quarter (whether whole or ſplit), and the Grey Peaſe 4*s.*: But Thoſe of the boiling Sort I paſs over; as they are wanted at Home to victual

tual our Shipping.—And as this propoſed Increaſe in the Bounty on the other Sorts of Grain, may be thought ſcarcely adequate to the Alteration of *that* on the Wheat, and the conſequent Reduction of its Price; I therefore deſire the Reader to recollect, that in the Introduction to this Pamphlet, I demonſtrated, that generally when Bread is dear; moſt other Sorts of Proviſions are proportionably ſo: or in other Terms, that they keep Pace together for Dearneſs and Cheapneſs.—Now as this is the Caſe; let us ſuppoſe Some Landholder's Table to coſt him 400*£*. per annum, when Wheat is at 12*£*. per Load, and Bread at 12*d*. the Gallon: It will follow, that if Wheat were at 9*£*. per Load, and Bread at 9*d*. the Gallon; the ſame Perſon would be able to keep as good a Table for 300*£*. as he did before for *Four*; and thus ſave *One:* And is not this an Object worthy of Attention?—The Farmer in his Houſhold Expences *too* would make a ſimilar Saving; and his Poor-Rates be lowered.—Every Houſekeeper in the Kingdom would be eaſed by it; and the Poor Man's Cottage ſmile with Peace and Plenty.—Add to theſe happy Circumſtances; that the Nation at large would be better able to bear Taxation in Caſe of a War; ſeeing Taxes agree beſt with Plenty and Cheapneſs.

And to prevent any Difficulties which might ariſe, in ſettling the Average-Prices from Time to Time, of Wheat and every other Sort of Grain in the Markets; I beg leave further to offer, that *Mark-Lane Market in London, ſhould be the* SOLE *Guide to the whole Kingdom, in every Thing relative to theſe Matters.*

Becauſe, in this Market, the Average-Prices are regulated with the greateſt Care and Exactneſs, beyond what they poſſibly can be in the Country; where there are frequent miſtakes, and ſometimes Juggling, of which I have known Inſtances.

I am aware, that this Method was propoſed to Parliament, ſome few Years ago; but reſiſted by the Merchants, Millers, and Others, of ſome of the Maritime Counties; alledging, that it would be giving the Merchants of London the Advantage over them, with reſpect to Intelligence, and conſequent Foreſight.—But to prevent this Obſtacle, I would propoſe further, that the Printer of every New's Paper in London, ſhould be obliged by Law, to recite in it, the Returns of the the Prices of different Sorts of Grain, as early as poſſible, after their Appearance in the Gazette; not as an Advertiſement, but by way of

publick Information. And if the Provincial News-Writers were to be obliged in like Manner; it would be an Amendment.

And becauſe ofttimes an unavoidable Error ariſes in the Average of Wheat particularly; what if this Article were generally to be ſold by *Weight* inſtead of Meaſure?—In London, however, if no where elſe?—For it now frequently happens, that the Wheat proper for Mealing ſhall advance in Price, whilſt the low Prices of the ordinary Sorts, perhaps damaged, and fit only for Starch and Biſcuiting, being added to the Prices of the Good; the Average of the Whole appears cheaper; whereas in fact the Market was dearer: And thus the Port is opened for Exportation with the Bounty, when it ought to be ſhut; and the Aſſize of Bread ſet erroneouſly. Seventy Pounds Avoirdupoiſe per Buſhel would, I conceive, be a ſuitable Standard Weight; leaving the Agents of Government nevertheleſs, to purchaſe in ſuch Manner, for the Uſe of the Publick, as they might think moſt proper. In Ireland all Sorts of Grain, and even Malt, are ſold by Weight; and I believe the ſame Method is generally uſed at Liverpool; for Wheat, at leaſt, I am certain it is: In Eſſex *too* this Article

ticle is ſold by Weight; or in other Terms at 66 *lb.* $\frac{1}{2}$ per Buſhel.

But it would not be needful that this Regulation ſhould extend to Wheat when removed from one Port or Place to another, whether by Barges, Shipping, or otherwiſe: *This* might be conducted by Meaſure, as well for Exportation as Importation, according to the Mode now in Uſe. —I propoſe Weight *only* as the Standard, in caſe of an *actual Transfer*, betwixt Buyer and Seller.

In fine, had the above Plan *generally*, or Some One ſimilar been eſtabliſhed in this Kingdom formerly, inſtead of *That* now in Force amongſt us; I have no Doubt but Bread would have been much cheaper than it has been for a long Time paſt, and by Analogy, moſt other Sorts of Proviſion; with little or no Detriment to the landed Intereſt; and greatly to the Comfort and Happineſs of many Thouſands of Families, eſpecially of the lower Orders of the People: And I hope theſe Propoſals, therefore, may be conſidered, as meriting the Attention of the Publick.

THE END.